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THE PERSONALITY OF JESUS IN THE TALMUD.

INTRODUCTION.

JESUS as represented in the Talmud is a subject which must interest the Christian student. For what can be of profounder interest than to learn what the Jews have said concerning Jesus and Christianity. We naturally look to the Jewish historian Josephus, who described and witnessed the downfall of the Jewish commonwealth. But we are disappointed. True that in his "Antiquities" (XVIII, 3, 3) Josephus has reference to Christ, but scholars are now generally agreed¹ that this passage is a later interpolation. Leaving then aside Josephus, we must turn to that encyclopedia of "Jewish wisdom and unwisdom" which is known as the Talmud. We cannot speak here of the origin and contents of this voluminous work, of which a complete translation into any modern language does not yet exist. We must refer the reader to our article "Talmud."² But even this work does not add anything to our knowledge, yea, it is rather disappointing. For the Talmud as we now have it contains not those Christian or rather anti-Christian passages, which it originally had. Modern Judaism complains of the intolerance of the Church, which from the time of Justinian³ persecuted and burned the Talmud. But it forgets that the Talmud only reaped what

¹ See however among other defenders of the passage in Josephus, Seitz, *Christus-Zeugnisse aus dem klassischen Altertum*, Cologne, 1906, 9 et. seq.

² See McClintock & Strong's *Theol. Enc.*, vol. X (1881) *s. v.* "Talmud."

³ On February 13, 553 he issued a novella "concerning the Jews."

it has sowed, and that the Church of Rome only acted in accordance with the Talmud itself. For it was the very Talmud which taught that in case of a fire breaking out on the Sabbath, the Gospels and other works of the *minim* (i. e., Christians) should not be rescued. "By the life of my son," said the Rabbi Tarphon, "should they (i. e., these writings) come into my hand I would burn them together with the names of God which they contained. Were I pursued, I would rather take refuge in a temple of idols than in their (i. e., the Christians') houses. For the latter are wilful traitors, while the heathen sinned in ignorance of the right way; and concerning them the Scripture says: 'Behind the doors, also, and the posts, hast thou set up thy remembrance'" (Is. lvii. 8).⁴ This fact should not be forgotten. The anti-Christian character of Jewish writings early attracted the attention of Christians, and Agobard, bishop of Lyons (820-830) in his *De Judaicis Superstitiobibus*, and Hrabanus Maurus, archbishop of Mayence, in his *Contra Judaeos*, written about 847 A. D., betray acquaintance with Jewish literature. The first attack upon the Talmud was made in the thirteenth century, when A. D. 1240 a conference was held at Paris between Nicolas Donin and some Jewish rabbis. When the question came up as to Jesus in the Talmud, rabbi Jechiel, the most prominent of the Jewish rabbis at that conference, would not admit that the Jesus spoken of in the Talmud was Jesus of Nazareth, but another Jesus, a discovery which was copied by some later writers. But modern Jews acknowledge the failure of this argument, for says Dr. Levin in his prize essay: "We must regard the attempt of rabbi Jechiel to ascertain that there were two by the name of Jesus as unfortunate, original as the idea may be."⁵ As the author of

⁴ Talmud, *Shabbath*, fol. 116, col. 1. This his animosity against Christianity induced some scholars to maintain that this Rabbi Tarphon is the same Trypho who is the interlocutor in Justin Martyr's *Dialogue*.

⁵ "Die Religionsdisputation des Rabbi Jechiel von Paris," published in Graetz's *Monatsschrift*, Breslau, 1869, p. 193.

this essay was a pupil of the rabbinical seminary at Breslau, he certainly expressed the opinion of his teachers. The result of the conference was that the Talmud in wagon-loads was burned at Paris in 1242.

In our days, such accusations against the Talmud were impossible, because all these offensive passages have been removed—not so much by the hands of the Christian censor, as by the Jews themselves—a fact only very often overlooked by controversialists.—In the Jewish year 5391 (i. e., A. D. 1631) a Jewish synod held at Petrikau, in Poland, issued a circular letter⁶ to the effect that all such passages in the Talmud which refer to Jesus etc., should be omitted in the future. This letter explains the absence of those offensive passages from the editions of the Talmud published since the publication of the Amsterdam edition in 1644. But happily or unhappily the Jews themselves have taken care that “the expurgated passages in the Talmud” did not become lost to their coreligionists by publishing them anonymously in pamphlets, of which Professor Strack of Berlin mentions no less than four such editions.⁷ These collections, published for the most part in Germany, are of a recent date, and are probably intended for more than a mere literary interest.

In order to give back to the Jews what the censor has taken from them and to show them that Christianity has nothing to fear from these expurgated passages, Professor Dalman of Leipsic, one of the few Christian scholars who are entitled to be heard even in *Talmudicis*, has published in a convenient form all these passages contained in the oldest editions of the Talmud and Midrash. To this collection of the censured passages H. Laible appended an introductory essay, and the whole was published under the

⁶The reader can find this circular letter in my article “Talmud” in Mc-Clintock & Strong’s *Theol. Enc.*, vol. x, p. 172.

⁷The present writer has also one of these collections, published at Cracow, 1893.

title *Jesus Christus im Talmud*, Berlin, 1891, by the missionary "Institutum Judaicum."

Before we enter into the debating club of the rabbis, we will make a few preliminary remarks which can prepare us for the Talmudic statements.

During the life-time of Jesus his miracles were not denied but were traced back to Beelzebub, the prince of the devils (Mark iii. 22). The scribes would not recognize one who sought not their company, but that of publicans and sinners with whom he ate; who broke the Sabbath and abolished the difference between clean and unclean. That the grave of Christ had been empty, the Jews did not deny, but they thought that the disciples had stolen the body (Matt. xxviii. 15). They freely made use of the invective Beelzebub ("master of the house") for the "master" of the Christians as well as for his servants (Matt. x. 25). After his death, the crucified Messiah, as Paul tells us, became unto them a stumbling block (1 Cor. i. 23). The destruction of Jerusalem had made no impression upon "these villains" and upon "that ungodly generation," as Josephus calls his countrymen (*War*, v, 13, 6). But if the sword of Judaism was perforce sheathed, its tongues and pens were active. The apologetic writings of the earliest centuries, show that the Jews were busy throughout this whole era in circulating calumnies against the Christians. Justin Martyr (died 163 A. D.) complains of the Jewish blasphemies against Christ and the Christians. "The high priests of your nation and your teachers," he says, "have caused that the name of Jesus should be profaned and reviled through the whole world" (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 117). "Nay, ye have added thereto, that Christ taught those impious, unlawful, horrible actions, which ye disseminate as charges above all against those who acknowledge Christ as Teacher and as the Son of God" (*ibid.* 108). "Your teachers exhort you to permit

yourselves no conversation whatever with us" (*ibid.* 112). "The Jews regard us as foes and opponents, and kill, and torture us if they have the power. In the lately-ended Jewish war, Bar Kokh'ba, the instigator of the Jewish revolt, caused Christians alone to be dragged to terrible tortures, whenever they would not deny and revile Jesus Christ" (*Apology*, I, 31). "The Jews hate us, because we say that Christ is already come, and because we point out that He, as had been prophesied, was crucified by them" (*Dial.* 35). "Ye have killed the Just and His prophets before Him. And now ye despise those who hope in Him and in God, the King over all and Creator of all things, who has sent Jesus; ye despise and dishonor them, as much as in you lies, in that in your synagogues ye curse those who believe in Christ. Ye only lack the power, on account of those who hold the reins of government, to treat us with violence. But as often as ye have had this power, ye have also done this" (*ibid.* 16). "In your synagogues ye curse all who have become Christians, and the same is done by the other nations, who give a practical turn to the curse, in that when any one acknowledges himself a Christian, they put him to death" (*ibid.* 96).

From the "True Word" of Celsus, which has been answered by Origen, we already learn some of the mean things which the Jews circulated about Jesus. The Jew whom Celsus introduces charges Jesus with having falsely proclaimed himself to be born of a virgin; afterwards he says that Jesus was born in a poor Jewish village, and that his mother was a poor woman of the country, who supported herself with spinning and needlework; that she was cast off by her betrothed, a carpenter; and that after she was rejected by her husband, she wandered about in disgrace and misery till she secretly gave birth to Jesus. Jesus himself was obliged from poverty and necessity to go down as servant into Egypt, where he learnt some of the

secret sciences which are in high honor among the Egyptians; and he placed such confidence in these sciences that on his return to his native land he gave himself out to be a god (I, 28). The Jew of Celsus also declares that the carpenter who was betrothed to Mary, put the mother of Jesus from him, because she had broken faith with him, in favor of a soldier named Panthera (I, 32).

Tertullian writing somewhere about 197-198 A. D. in his *De Spectaculis*, chap. 30, in which he depicts the glorious spectacle of the second coming says that he will turn to the Jews who raged against the Lord and say unto them: "This is your carpenter's son, your harlot's son; your sabbath-breaker, your Samaritan, your demon-possessed! This is He whom ye bought from Judas; this is He who was struck with reeds and fists, dishonored with spittle, and given a draught of gall and vinegar! This is He whom His disciples have stolen secretly, that it may be said He has risen, or the gardener abstracted that his lettuces might not be damaged by the crowds of visitors!"

Such is already the attitude of Judaism towards Jesus at a time when the Talmud was in a state of formation. But if we wish to become acquainted with the Rabbinical Jesus-tradition we must examine the constituent parts of the Talmud, namely the Mishna, Tosephtha (i. e., addition or supplement to the Mishna), the Gemara or commentary on the Mishna, and the Midrashim or homiletic literature, especially the Midrash Kohelet or Midrash on Ecclesiastes. The Talmudic Jesus traditions continued themselves even after the time of the completion of the Talmud. They were further developed and enlarged, and reached their full expression in the Middle Ages. In that period the hatred of Jesus which was never quite dormant, begat a literature, in comparison with which the Talmud must be termed almost innocent. The Toldoth Jeshu literature originated, which is still continued. In the Toldoth Jeshu a detailed

picture of the life of Jesus was put together, of which the authors of the Talmud had no anticipation. The three consonants *j s (shin) v*, with which the name Jeshu was written, are here explained as being the first letters of the three words: *j=jimmach, sh=sh'mo, v=v'zichro*, i. e., "may be blotted out his name and his memory"! The Toldoth Jeshu is nothing but the offspring of low fanaticism, malicious delight in defamation, and vulgar imagination which respectable Jews have always despised.

After these preliminaries we now take up the passages of the Talmud as given by Dalman, and which are claimed to refer to Jesus. For the sake of convenience we arrange them under different heads.

BIRTH AND PARENTAGE OF JESUS.

In the Talmud Shabbath 104^b we read: "He who cuts upon his flesh." It is a tradition that Rabbi Eliezer said to the wise, Has not Ben Stada brought magic spells from Egypt in a cut which was upon his body? They answered him, He was a fool, and we do not take proofs from fools. [Ben Stada is Ben Pandira. Rab Hisda said, The husband was Stada, the paramour was Pandira. The husband was Paphos ben Jehudah, the mother was Stada. The mother was Miriam the dresser of women's hair, as we say in Pumbeditha, Such a one has been false to her husband.]¹

The above passage occurs in a discussion upon the words in the Mishnah which forbid all kinds of writing to be done on the Sabbath. Several kinds are specified, and among them the making of marks upon the flesh. The words at the beginning of the translation, "he who cuts upon his flesh," are the text, so to speak, of the Mishnah which is discussed in what follows. To illustrate the prac-

¹ The passage in [] which also occurs in Sanhedrin 67a, is not found in modern editions. It is supplied from Rabbinowicz *Diqduqé Sopherim*, on the authority of the Munich and Oxford manuscripts, and the older editions.

tice of making marks on the skin, the compilers of the Gemara introduce a tradition, according to which Rabbi Eliezer asked the question, "Did not Ben Stada bring magical spells from Egypt in a cut which was upon his body?" His argument was that as Ben Stada had done this, the practice might be allowable. The answer was that Ben Stada was a fool, and his case proved nothing. Upon the mention however of Ben Stada, a note is added to explain who that person was, and it is for the sake of this note that the passage is quoted.

The two names Ben Stada and Ben Pandera evidently refer to the same person, and that that person is Jesus is shown clearly by the fact that we sometimes meet with the full name "Jeshu son of Pandera," also Jeshu son of Stada." It seems that the question was argued in the schools which of the two familiar designations (son of Stada, son of Pandera) was the correct one. One of the two appellations appeared to be necessarily false. Which was correct?

The subject treated was that the son of Stada had brought charms with him out of Egypt in an incision in his flesh. Thereupon some one objects: the designation Ben Stada is false; he was the son of Pandera. No, says Rab Hisda (a Babylonian teacher, A. D. 217-309), Stada was the name of the husband (of his mother), Pandira the name of her paramour. To call him either the one or the other is therefore correct. To this however is objected that this cannot be true, because the husband is known to have been called Paphos ben Jehudah. Stada must have been not the father but the mother. But how can that be, because the mother was called Miriam the dresser of women's hair? As rejoinder to this follows the conclusion: Of that we are aware, but she is also called Stada, by her nickname. Insomuch as she had a paramour, she was given the "sobriquet" Stada, which consists of the words *stath da*, i. e., she has gone aside, from her husband. Thus

at least the word is explained in the Babylonian Academy at Pumbeditha.

Various attempts have been made to explain the two names Ben Stada and Ben Pandira (also written Pandera, or Pantira). But none of the suggested explanations solves the problem. We leave the two names as relics of ancient Jewish mockery against Jesus, the clue to whose meaning is now lost.

Mention has also been made of Miriam (of which Mary is the equivalent). She is called *m'gaddla nashaia*, i. e., a women's hairdresser. How came the Talmud to bestow this epithet upon the mother of Jesus, for whom elsewhere it has the characteristic designation of adulteress? That Jesus's mother was named Mary, was known to the Jews; that she had born Jesus out of wedlock, was maintained by them. Then they heard a noted Christian woman of Jesus's time often spoken of, who was named Mary of Magdala. What was more natural for those who had already long ceased to ascertain more particularly at the mouth of Christians the history of Jesus, than by this Mary (of) Magdala simply to understand Jesus's mother, especially since their knowledge was confined to one Mary? She was reported to be a great sinner. This harmonized in a twofold way with their assumption, for, that Jesus's mother was a sinner, was maintained by them with the utmost certainty, and now they obtained, as they supposed, actual confirmation of this from the Christians. Miriam (of) Magdala was accordingly the mother of Jesus, and by a name-play the Magdala was turned into *m'gaddla nashaia*, i. e., women's hairdresser.

In the Talmudic passage quoted above we are told that Stada's (i. e., Mary's) lawful husband was Paphos ben Jehudah. Now of this Paphos, who lived a century after Jesus, the Talmud Gittin 90^a narrates the following:

"There is a tradition, Rabbi Meir used to say: 'Just as

there are various kinds of taste as regards eating, so there are also various dispositions as regards women. There is a man into whose cup a fly falls and he casts it out, but all the same he does not drink it [the cup]. Such was the manner of Paphos ben Jehudah, who used to lock the door upon his wife, and go out.' "

All we learn from this passage directly with regard to Paphos ben Jehudah, a contemporary of Rabbi Akiba, is that he locked up his wife; we are, however, led to conclude, indirectly, that she ultimately proved unfaithful to her tyrannical spouse. What, then, was more simple than for a story-teller to connect this with the details of unfaithfulness found in his Jeshu repertoire? The erring wife was just like Miriam; before long she actually became Miriam, and finally Paphos ben Jehudah was confidently given as Miriam's husband! So they had it in later times, and the great Talmudic commentator Rashi (died A. D. 1105) comments thus upon our passage: "Paphos ben Jehudah was the husband of Mary, the women's hair-dresser. Whenever he went out of his house into the street, he locked the door upon her, that no one might be able to speak with her. And that is a course which became him not; for on this account there arose enmity between them, and she in wantonness broke her faith with her husband."

A MARY-LEGEND.

In Talmud Hagigah ^{4b} we read the following: "When Rab Joseph came to this verse (Prov. xiii. 23), 'But there is that is destroyed without judgment,' he wept. He said: 'Is there really some one who is going [away], when it is not his time?' None but this [told] of Rab Bibi bar Abbai. The Angel of Death was with him. The Angel said to his messenger, 'Go, bring me Miriam the dresser of women's hair.' He brought him Miriam the teacher of chil-

dren. He [the Angel] said, 'I told thee Miriam the dresser of women's hair.' He said, 'If so, I will take this one back.' He said, 'Since thou has brought this one, let her be among the number [of the dead].'"

In this narrative we have a monstrous anachronism. Rab Joseph, who is mentioned here, was born at Shiti, in Babylonia, A. D. 259 and died in 325. Rab Bibi flourished in the fourth century. The latter can neither have seen Mary nor have been her contemporary. The Talmudic commentary *Tosaphoth* remarks: "The Angel of Death was with him: he related what had already happened, for this about Miriam the dresser of women's hair took place in [the time of] the second temple, for she was the mother of that *so and so* [i. e., Jesus], as it is said in *Shabbath 104^b*." But the wording of the Talmud says quite distinctly that Mary lived in the very time of Rab Bibi, on which account the Angel of Death spoke with him not of one who had existed earlier, but of one actually living. Further this angel, we may note, at that very time in the presence of Rab Bibi commissions his messenger, to bring her, i. e., deliver her to death. The *Tosaphoth* notes on *Shabbath 104^b* seek needlessly to remove the anachronism by the assumption that there were two women's hairdressers, named Mary. But this attempt is in vain, for nothing is known of that second Mary. Besides we must not forget that the Talmud, in relation to Jesus, has no conception of chronology, and indeed, the later the origin of notices about Jesus, the more reckless are they in their chronological lapses. The post-Talmudic Second Targum on the Book of Esther actually reckons Jesus among the ancestors of Haman, an anachronism, which Levy in his *Targumic dictionary* (I, 330) seeks in vain to justify. In the face of such an unfathomable error what signifies the erroneous representation that Rab Bibi lived in the time of Mary?

JESUS ALLEGED TO BE BORN OUT OF WEDLOCK.

I. *The Pretended Record.*

It is said in Mishnah *Jebamoth* iv, 13² (Gemara 49^b): "Simeon ben Azai said, 'I have found in Jerusalem a book of genealogies, and therein is written: That *so and so*³ is a *mamzer*⁴ of a married woman, to confirm the words of Rabbi Jehoshua.' "

This passage is from the Mishnah, and therefore belongs to the older stratum of the Talmud. Ben Azai flourished at the end of the first and the beginning of the second century, and was a friend and contemporary of Rabbi Akiba who was a particularly zealous opponent of the Christians. When Ben Azai reported that he had found a book of pedigrees, in which it was stated that *so and so* (peloni) was of spurious birth, it is certainly probable that reference is to Jesus. Unless some well-known man were intended, there would no point in referring to him; and unless there had been some strong reason for avoiding his name, the name would have been given in order to strengthen the argument founded upon the case. For it is said that Ben Azai made his statement in order "to confirm the words of Rabbi Joshua." The matter in question concerned the definition of the notion of *mamzer*, a predicate which the Jews only too willingly ascribed to Jesus. That the passage refers to Jesus is admitted by the Jewish scholar J. Derenbourg (in *Revue des Etudes Juives*, III, 293, n. 3).

² It is interesting that the English translators of the Eighteen Treatises of the Mishna, rabbis De Sola and Raphall (London, 1845) have not translated this part of the fourth chapter. Why?

³ The original reads *peloni*, and is one of the twenty-eight periphrastic titles of Jesus from Jewish writings, adduced by Eisenmenger in the second chapter of the first part of his *Entdecktes Judenthum*.

⁴ I. e., a bastard, a predicate attributed by the Jews to Jesus.

THE ALLEGED CONFESSION BY THE MOTHER OF JESUS.

In the treatise Kallah 18^b we read the following: "A shameless person is according to Rabbi Eliezer a bastard, according to Rabbi Joshua a son of woman in her separation, according to Rabbi Akiba a bastard *and* son of a woman in her separation. Once there sat elders at the gate when two boys passed by; one had his head covered, the other bare. Of him who had his head uncovered Rabbi Eliezer said, 'a bastard!' Rabbi Joshua said, 'A son of a woman in her separation!' Rabbi Akiba said, 'A bastard *and* son of a woman in her separation!' They said to Rabbi Akiba, 'How has thine heart impelled thee to the audacity of contradicting the words of thy colleagues?' He said to them, 'I am about to prove it.' Thereupon he went to the boy's mother, and found her sitting in the market and selling pulse. He said to her, 'My daughter, if thou tellest me the thing which I ask thee, I will bring thee to eternal life.' She said to him, 'Swear it to me!' Thereupon Rabbi Akiba took the oath with his lips, while he canceled it in his heart. Then said he to her, 'Of what sort is this thy son?' She said to him, 'When I betook myself to the bridal chamber, I was in my separation, and my husband stayed away from me. But my paronymph [i. e., the bridegroom's best man] came to me, and by him I have this son.' So the boy was discovered to be both a bastard and the son of a woman in her separation. Thereupon said they, 'Great is Rabbi Akiba, in that he has put to shame his teachers.' In the same hour they said, 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who has revealed this secret to Rabbi Akiba ben Joseph.' "

This famous discussion on bastardy, even when taken by itself is remarkable from the ethical point of view. Considering the strange ascription of an act of heartless perjury to Akiba as the means whereby he extorted the con-

fession from the boy's mother, and the far more curious addition at the end of the passage which blesses the God of Israel for revealing "this secret" after the use of such questionable means, we ask: Can modern Jews still uphold the reputation of the Talmud or of its great authority, Akiba?

Considering the passage by itself, we see that neither the name of the son nor that of the mother is here mentioned. But the fact that use has been made of the story in the *Toldoth Jeshu* (ed. Hulreich, p. 22; ed. Wagenseil, p. 12; MS. Strassburg, ed. Krauss,⁵ p. 39; MS. Vindobona, *ibid.*, p. 69) shows that it was regarded as having reference to Jesus. That Akiba lived about a century after Jesus, is of no account, since the Talmud abounds in anachronisms.

JESUS AND HIS TEACHER.

Whereas the New Testament knows nothing of Jesus having enjoyed the tuition of a rabbi, the Talmud *Sanhedrin*, 107b (and almost exactly in the same words *Sota*, 47a) narrates the following: "Our Rabbis teach, Ever let the left hand repel and the right hand invite, not like Elisha who repulsed Gehazi with both hands, and not like Rabbi Joshua ben Perachjah who repulsed Jeshu (the Nazarene) with both hands. What of Rabbi Joshua ben Perachjah? When Jannai the king killed our Rabbis, Joshua ben Perachjah [and Jeshu] fled to Alexandria in Egypt. When there was peace, Simon ben Shetach wrote to him: 'From me [Jerusalem] the city of holiness, to thee Alexandria of Egypt [my sister]. My husband stays in thy midst and I sit forsaken.' He came and found himself at a certain inn; they showed him great honor. He said, 'How beautiful is this Ascania!'⁶ [Jesus] said to him, 'Rabbi,

⁵ *Das Leben Jesu nach jüdischen Quellen*, Berlin, 1902.

⁶ The word means both inn and innkeeper. Joshua uses it in the first sense, the answering remark implies the second meaning "hostess."

she has narrow eyes.' He said, 'Wretch, dost thou employ thyself thus?' He sent out 400 trumpets and excommunicated him. He [Jesus] came before him many times and said to him, 'Receive me.' But he would not notice him. One day he [i. e., Joshua] was reciting the Shema (i. e., the words: 'Hear, O Israel,' Deut. vi. 4 et seq.), he [i. e., Jesus] came before him. He was minded to receive him, and made a sign to him. He [i. e., Jesus] thought that he repelled him. He went and hung up a tile and worshiped it. Joshua said to him, 'Return.' He replied, 'Thus I have received from thee, that every one who sins and causes the multitude to sin, they give him not the chance to repent.' And the teacher [i. e., he who has handed down this tradition] has said, 'Jesus the Nazarene practiced magic and led astray and deceived Israel.'"⁷

In the Jerusalem Talmud *Hagigah*, 77d, the same story is related only that in place of Joshua ben Perachjah his contemporary Judah ben Tabbai is placed and that the name of Jesus is not mentioned, for which we read "one of his (Tabbai's) disciples." But whether the reading is Joshua ben Perachjah or Judah ben Tabbai we have here again one of those striking anachronisms for which the Talmud is famous. The event under King Jannai (i. e., Alexander Jannaeus) is historical. After the capture of the stronghold Bethome King Jannai (104-78 B. C.) had 800 Pharisees crucified. This crucifixion was the occasion of the flight into Syria and Egypt on the part of the Pharisees generally in the country, and among them Joshua ben Perachjah and Judah ben Tabbai. The question may be asked, how did the name of Jesus⁸ come to be introduced into a story referring to a time so long before his own?

⁷ This formal charge is also found in *Sanhedrin* 43a, where the words of "the teacher" are found.

⁸ In the edition of Basel, 1578-81, and in all later ones, the censor of the press has expunged the name of Jesus, which is found in all the older editions of the Talmud.

Bearing in mind that the rabbis had extremely vague ideas of the chronology of past times, we may perhaps find the origin of the story in its Babylonian form in a desire to explain the connection of Jesus with Egypt. The connecting link may, perhaps, be found in the fact of a flight into Egypt to escape the anger of a king. This was known in regard to Joshua ben Perachjah, and the Gospel (Matt. ii. 13 et seq.) records a similar event in regard to Jesus. There may be some other details in the life of Jesus which the rabbis had in view when they remodeled the story to suit their purpose. Hence, in rejecting the date, it is not absolutely necessary to reject the whole of the Babylonian version as entirely devoid of every element of genuineness. Again, as to the lateness of the Babylonian version, it is to be observed that the Gemara quotes from an earlier source or tradition of the story, as can be seen from the closing words of the Talmud passage (*Sanhedrin* 107b) given above.

JESUS A MAGICIAN.

Whereas the *Toldoth Jesu* attributes the miraculous power of Jesus to the Shem (i. e., the Tetragrammaton or Ineffable Name) which he stole from the Temple at Jerusalem by a strange device, the Talmud knows nothing of this robbing of the Shem from the Temple, but records that Jesus brought magic out of Egypt.⁹ The passages referring to it are:

1. *Tosephtha*¹⁰ *Shabbath XII*: "He who upon the Sabbath cuts letters upon his body is, according to the view of Rabbi Eliezer guilty, according to the view of the sages he is not guilty. Rabbi Eliezer said to the sages: 'Ben Stada surely learned sorcery by such writing.' They re-

⁹ Egypt was regarded as the special home of magic, an opinion expressed in the *Talmud Kiddushin* 49b: "Ten measures of sorcery descended into the world, Egypt received nine, the rest of the world one."

¹⁰ That is "supplement to the *Mishna*"; best edition by Zuckerman, (Pasewalk, 1880), p. 126.

plied to him: 'Should we in any wise on account of a fool destroy all reasonable men?' "

2. Jerusalem Shabbath 13d: "He who scratches on the skin in the fashion of writing is guilty, but he who makes marks on the skin in the fashion of writing is exempt from punishment. Rabbi Eliezer said to them: 'But has not Ben Stada brought magic spells out of Egypt in this way?' They answered him: 'On account of one fool we do not ruin a multitude of reasonable men.' "

3. Shabbath 104b: "It is a tradition that Rabbi Eliezer said to the sages: 'Did not Ben Stada bring spells from Egypt in a cut which was upon his flesh?' They replied, 'He was a fool, and they do not bring a proof from a fool.' "

It has already been shown above that Ben Stada denotes Jesus. In the passages before us he is charged with bringing magical charms from Egypt concealed in an incision in his flesh. The charge that he was a magician is no doubt based on the belief that he did many miracles, a belief which found ample support in the Gospel records. To say that Jesus learned magic in Egypt, the special home of magic according to the Talmud Kiddushin 49b already referred to, is to say that he was a great magician, more powerful than others. That he had something to do with Egypt we have also seen above in the passage which makes him a disciple of Joshua ben Perachjah. As to the manner in which he is alleged to have brought with him Egyptian magic, a curious explanation is given by Rashi, the Talmud commentator on Shabbath 104b to the effect that "the Egyptian magicians searched every one who quitted the land of Egypt, whether he was taking any books of magic with him, in order that the magical art (namely, the Egyptian) might not come into other countries." Now since Jesus could not take them away in writing, he concealed them in the manner described, or perhaps tatooed magical signs on his flesh.

JESUS AN IDOLATER.

Jesus is not only a fool but also an idolater. In the Talmud Sanhedrin 103a we read on the passage Ps. xci. 10, "There shall no evil befall thee," that it means that evil dreams and bad fantasies shall not vex thee; on "Neither shall any plague come nigh thy tent," that it means that thou shalt not have a son or disciple who burns his food publicly like Jeshu (i. e., Jesus) the Nazarene.¹¹

The last clause is also found in Talmud Berachoth 17b. The authority who quotes this passage is Rabbi Hisda, a Babylonian who lived A. D. 217-309. He quotes it in the name of Rabbi Jeremiah bar Abba, who was his contemporary, and apparently of about the same age. As to the term "to burn his food publicly," lexicographers are of different opinions. Dalman says that this means "to renounce publicly what one has learned." Laible thinks that the term is "a contemptuous expression for the public offering of sacrifice to idols. That the Christians in their assemblies offered sacrifice to idols was as firmly the opinion of the Jews of olden time as it is that of many of the present day. Naturally, therefore, it was concluded that Jesus must have commenced it." May be it refers to the fact that Jesus went and taught the people publicly—the poor, the outcast, the oppressed, the sinners, the publicans, in a word the unpurified people, with whom a disciple of a rabbi ought not to associate. But whatever the meaning, certain it is that in the eyes of the rabbis Jesus was a heterodox, who according to Talmud Sanhedrin 43a and 107b "corrupted and seduced Israel."

THE CLAIM OF JESUS DENIED.

In the Jerusalem Talmud Taanith 65b we read with reference to Num. xxiii. 19: "Rabbi Abahu said, If a

¹¹ So in all the older editions and the manuscripts.

man shall say to thee, 'I am God,' he lies; if he says, 'I am the son of man,' he shall rue it; 'I will go up to heaven' (to this applies Num. xxiii. 19) he saith, but shall not perform it."

That the passage refers to Jesus there can be no possibility of doubt. This Rabbi Abahu, who lived in Cæsarea at the end of the third and the beginning of the fourth century, seems to have largely engaged in controversy with Jewish Christians. According to Abahu any one who says that he is God and at the same time designates himself as Son of Man—and this no man save Jesus has ever done—is a liar.

The import of the testimony of Jesus to Himself is mentioned also in the Midrash Pesikta Rabbathi (ed. Friedmann, 1880), fol. 100b: "Rabbi Hia bar Abba [about 216 A. D.] said: 'If the son of the harlot shall say to thee, There be two Gods, answer him, I am He of the sea, I am He of Sinai.' Rabbi Hia bar Abba said, 'If the son of the harlot shall say to thee, There be two Gods, answer him, It is here (Deut. v. 4) written not *Gods* but *the Lord* hath spoken with you face to face.' "

That God has a son, and that for this reason there are two Gods, passes here for the teaching of the harlot's son, wherein the reference is clear, namely to Jesus.

An amplification of Abahu's work, given above, is found in the Midrash Jalqut Shimoni (also Midrash Jelammedenu) on Num. xxiii. 7, where we read that Rabbi Eleazar ha-Qappar said that "God gave strength to his (Balaam's) voice, so that it went from one end of the world to the other, because he looked forth and beheld the peoples that bow down to the sun and moon and stars, and to wood and stone, and he looked forth and beheld that there was a man, son of a woman, who should rise up and seek to make himself God, and to cause the whole world to go astray. Therefore God gave power to his

voice that all the peoples of the world might hear, and thus he spake, 'Give heed that ye go not astray after that man, for it is written (Num. xxiii. 19), 'God is not a man that he should lie,' and if he says that he is God he is a liar, and he will deceive and say that he departeth and cometh again in the end, he saith and he shall not perform. See what is written (Num. xxiv. 23): 'And he took up his parable and said, Alas, who shall live when he makes (himself) God!' Balaam intended to say, Alas, who shall live of that nation which heareth that man who hath made himself God."—

Now Eleazar ha-Qappar, who is reported to have said all this, was earlier than Abahu, for he died about 260 A. D. Whether all is to be taken as Qappar's work, we know not. At all events we have here a naive prophecy after the event, which makes Balaam quote his own words (Num. xxiii. 19) as scripture. One thing however is certain: Jesus is here referred to more fully than in the shorter saying of Abahu.

BALAAM-JESUS.

In Mishna Sanhedrin x, 2, we read: "Three kings and four private men have no part in the world to come. The three kings are Jeroboam, Ahab and Manasseh. . . . the four private men are Balaam, Doeg, Ahitophel and Gehazi."

This passage belongs to the famous chapter of the Mishna, entitled *Chelek*, because it commences by saying that "all Israel have part (*chelek*) in the world to come," and then enumerates the exceptions. The three kings, Jeroboam, Ahab and Manasseh are all mentioned in the Old Testament as having introduced idolatry, perverted the true religion. The immediate connection of the four private persons arouses the conjecture that they were condemned for the same offense. This conclusion is strength-

ened by the fact that the preceding paragraph of the Mishna (x, 1) in this chapter excepts from the privilege of the world to come according to Rabbi Akiba also such a person "who reads in external books and who whispers over a wound, and says, None of the diseases which I sent in Egypt will I lay upon thee, I the Lord am thy healer." Now the external books, according to the Gemara upon this passage (fol. 100b) are the *Siphre Minim*, i. e., the books of the Jewish Christians or Christians generally, which books by way of caricature Rabbi Meir (130-160 A. D.) calls *awen gillaryon* (literally, margin of evil) and Rabbi Jochanan (Meir's contemporary) calls *awon gillaryon* (i. e., blank paper of sin)—thus in Talmud Sabbath 116a (MS. Munich).

The words "who whispers over a wound," refer to the miraculous cures of the Christians.

The combination of Balaam with Doeg, Ahitophel and Gehazi is certainly extraordinary. Balaam was not an Israelite, and therefore could not logically be included in a list of exceptions to a rule which only affected Israelites. It is evident that Balaam here does not mean the ancient prophet of Num. xxii et seq., but some one else for whom that ancient prophet could serve as a type. From the Jewish point of view there was considerable likeness between Balaam and Jesus. Both had led the people astray; and if the former had tempted them to gross immorality, the latter, according to the Rabbis, had tempted them to gross apostasy. This was the great charge against Jesus, that "he practised magic and deceived and led astray Israel." If it be true that Balaam stands for Jesus, then it is reasonable to suppose that Doeg, Ahitophel and Gehazi stand for the names of some other persons who had fallen under severe Rabbinical displeasure. Who they were precisely we have now no means of discovering, and the supposition that they refer to Peter, James and John, or Peter,

Judas Iscariot¹² and Paul may be possible. However this may be, the rabbis were convinced that the disciples of Balaam *en bloc* would inherit Gehenna, as we read in Aboth v, 19: "The disciples of our father Abraham enjoy this world and inherit the world to come, as it is written (Prov. viii. 21) 'That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance, and that I may fill their treasuries.' The disciples of Balaam the impious inherit Gehenna and go down into the pit of destruction, as it is written (Ps. lv. 24): 'But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction; bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days: ' "

And if there should by any chance be still the slightest hesitation in the mind of the reader that Balaam in these passages is identical with Jesus, the following passage should forever set his mind at rest.

THE AGE OF BALAAM (JESUS).

In the Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 106b we read thus: "A certain heretic (*min*) said to Rabbi Hanina, 'Have you ever heard how old Balaam was?' He replied, 'There is nothing written about it. But since it is said, Bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days (Ps. lv. 23), he was either thirty-three or thirty-four years old.' He (the heretic) said, 'Thou hast spoken well. I have seen the chronicle of Balaam in which it is said, Balaam, the lame, was thirty-three years old when the robber Phinchas killed him.' "

Rabbi Hanina lived at Sepphoris and died 232 A. D. There seems to be no apparent reason why a Christian (a *min*) should have asked him as to the age of the ancient Balaam. He might well have inquired about the age of Jesus. It would seem, however, that the Christian was

¹² Judas Iscariot would answer to Doeg the Edomite, who betrayed David (1 Sam. xxii. 9).

not asking for information, but had a desire to find out whether the rabbi knew anything about Jesus. For he confirmed the rabbi's answer by facts known to himself. The "Chronicle of Balaam" probably denotes a Gospel, though none of the known Gospels states in so many words that Jesus was as much as thirty-three years old. If, however, it was believed that his ministry lasted three years, and that he was "about thirty years old" when he began to preach, the statement of the Christian is sufficiently borne out, though not verbally correct. Rabbi Hanina must have had fairly good grounds for his opinion as to the age of Jesus, or he would not have quoted a text which would only apply to the case of a man about thirty-three or thirty-four years old.

As to Phinches the robber or "Pinchas Listāāh" who is said to have killed Balaam, it is difficult to understand why this worthy, who is mentioned in Num. xxv. 23 et seq. as having led an army against the Midianites and slain their kings together with Balaam with the sword, and this at Moses's command, should be called "the robber." Some Jewish writers see in Pinchas Listāāh a corruption of Pontius Pilate. The corruption, we admit, is a somewhat violent one; but that a Jew should call Phinches a robber, being, as he was, a highly honored hero of tradition, must certainly be surprising. There is no doubt that under this mention of Pinchas Listāāh there lies concealed a reference to Pontius Pilate.

THE TRIAL OF JESUS.

I. In the Mishna Sanhedrin X, 11, we read: "In regard to all who are worthy of death according to the Torah, they do not use concealment against them, except in the case of the deceiver. How do they deal with him? They put two disciples of the wise in the inner chamber, and he sits in the outer chamber, and they light the lamp so that

they shall see him and hear his voice. And thus they did to Ben Stada in Lud; two disciples of the wise were chosen for him, and they (brought him to the court of justice) and stoned him."

2. In the Jerusalem Recension VII, 16 (fol. 25c, d) we read: "The deceiver; this denotes a private man. Not a sage? No. From the time he deceives he is no longer a sage. And from the time he is deceived he is no longer a sage. How do they deal with him to work craftily against him? They conceal (in his case) two witnesses in the inner chamber and make him sit in the outer chamber, and they light a lamp over him that they may see him and may hear his voice. Thus did they to Ben Stada in Lud, and they concealed in his case two disciples of the wise, and brought him to the court of justice and stoned him.

3. The Babylonian Gemara Sanhedrin 67a has the following version of this incident: "For it is a tradition that in regard to the rest of all who are worthy of death according to the law, they do not use concealment except in this case (i. e., of the deceiver). How do they deal with him? They light a lamp for him in the inner chamber and set witnesses in the outer chamber, so that they may see him and hear his voice, but he does not see them. And one says to him, 'Say to me what thou saidst to me in private.' and he says it to him. And another says to him, 'How shall we forsake our God who is in heaven, and practice false worship?' If he repents, it is well. If he says, 'Such is our duty and thus it becomes us to do,' the witnesses who hear him from outside, bring him to the court of justice and stone him. And thus they did to Ben Stada in Lud, and they hung him on the eve of the Passover."

That the case described in these passages refers to Jesus (called Ben Stada), who was also charged with deceiving

the people, is clear. It is also clear that at an early period there was a tradition that the condemnation of Jesus had been obtained by the fraudulent means described above. There can be no doubt that in these passages we have here only scanty remnants of a tradition about that trial, combined perhaps with hearsay information derived from Christians. Renan in his *Life of Jesus* (chap. 24) believes that the New Testament account of the Trial of Jesus must be supplemented by these Talmudic notices. But an equally good, if not better authority, Keim (*Jesus of Nazara* VI, 47n.) says that there is no ground for correcting the Gospel account by the help of the Talmud. Rather it is the Gospel account which throws light upon the Talmudic tradition. From the Gospel story are derived the two witnesses (Matt. xxvi. 60. In Mark xiv. 56, 57, several witnessed are mentioned). The Gospel speaks of "false" witnesses, and this is perhaps the origin of the Talmudic assertion that the witnesses were concealed in order to entrap the accused. The mention of the outer and inner chamber recalls Matt. xxvi. 69, where it is said that "Peter was sitting without in the court" while the trial was going on within the house of the High Priest. The lighted lamp may have been suggested by the mention of the fire kindled in the outer court (Luke xxii. 55). And finally the statement that the accused was carried to the court of justice, may have its origin in the fact that there was, according to the Gospels, a second sitting of the council after the one at which the witnesses had been present (Mark xv. 1). The Talmudic tradition differs from the Gospel in saying that the trial took place at Lud (Lydda), and that Jesus was hung on the eve of the Passover. Of this we shall speak further on. But all tends to show that the Talmud has preserved only a very vague and confused recollection of Jesus, whose name was doubtless held in abhorrence as that of a dangerous heretic and deceiver.

THE EXECUTION OF JESUS.

We read Sanhedrin 43a: "And it is tradition: On the eve of the Passover they hung Jeshu [the Nazarene]. And the crier went forth before him forty days (saying), '[Jeshu the Nazarene] goeth forth to be stoned, because he hath practiced magic¹³ and deceived and led astray Israel. Any one who knoweth aught in his favor, let him come and declare concerning him. And they found naught in his favor. And they hung him on the eve of the Passover. Ulla said, 'Would it be supposed that [Jeshu the Nazarene] a revolutionary, had aught in his favor?' He was a deceiver, and the Merciful (i. e., God) hath said (Deut. xiii. 8), 'Thou shalt not spare, neither shalt thou conceal him.' But it was different with [Jeshu the Nazarene], for he was near to the kingdom."¹⁴

In this passage we are told that Jesus was hung. With this must be combined the evidence of the passages given in the former section that he was stoned. The connection between the two statements is that Jesus was stoned, and his dead body then hung upon a cross. This is clear from the Mishna Sanhedrin vi, 4: "All who are stoned are hung,

¹³ It is certainly strange that Jesus was charged with having practiced magic, whereas magical skill was one of the qualifications necessary for a member of the Sanhedrin. Thus we read in treatise Sanhedrin 17a: Rabbi Jochanan says, none were allowed to sit in the Sanhedrin, who were not men of stature, men of wisdom, men of good appearance, aged, skilled in magic, and acquainted with seventy languages, so that the Sanhedrin might not be obliged to hear through an interpreter.—That this statement is in opposition to Deut. xviii. 10-12 makes no difference with the rabbis. The commentary indeed tells us, that this magical skill was acquired in self-defence "in order to kill the magicians who trusted in their magical arts to deliver them out of the hands of the tribunal." But this explanation does not mend the matter. Magic is a thing absolutely unlawful and expressly forbidden by God. But it may well be doubted whether the members of this great council confined their magical exercitations to the killing of magicians. We find elsewhere, that the rabbis at least made other magical experiments, and have even recorded the means which they employed, for the benefit of posterity. We refer to Talmud Berachoth 6a, where the people and all Israel are instructed in the means to see demons. The passage being too silly, we refrain from giving it.

¹⁴ The whole of this passage is expunged from the later editions. It is given here on the authority of the MSS. and early editions set forth by Rabbinowicz. The words in [] are from MSS.

according to Rabbi Eliezer. The sages say, None is hung except the blasphemer and he who practices a false worship." The corpse was hung to a cross or else to a single beam, of which one end rested on the ground, the other against a wall (same Mishnah). The Gospels, of course, say nothing about a stoning of Jesus, and the Talmudic tradition is probably an inference from the fact that he was known to have been hung. The inference would be further strengthened by the application of the text, Deut. xxi. 23, "He that is hanged is accursed of God," a text which Paul had to disarm in reference to Jesus (Gal. iii. 13). The Talmud knows nothing of an execution of Jesus by the Romans, as modern Jews claim, but makes it wholly the act of the Jews.

What is meant by the herald going forth during forty days before the death of Jesus, is hard to tell. The herald is, of course, fictitious; the number forty may have its origin in the Gospel. The phrase that Jesus was "near to the kingdom," Laible interprets as referring to the "Roman authorities," which would explain the hesitation of Pontius Pilate to put Jesus to death. We rather prefer the suggestion that the reference is to the supposed Davidic descent of Jesus, a suggestion made by the late Professor Delitzsch in his *Jesus and Hillel* (3d ed., 1879) where he says on page 12, note: "Mary is also called in the Talmuds a daughter of Eli, and Jesus is called (Sanhedrin 43a) 'related to the royal house (of David).' "

JESUS IN HELL.

In the Talmud Gittin 56b, 57a, we read: "Onkelos bar Kalonikos, nephew of Titus, desired to become a Jew. He called up Titus by necromancy. He said to him, 'Who is honored in this world?' He replied, 'Israel.' 'What about joining them?' He replied, 'Their words are many and

thou canst not fulfil them. Go, join thyself to them in this world and thou shalt become a leader, for it is written (Lam. i. 5), "Her adversaries have become the head." Every oppressor of Israel is made a head.' He said to him, 'What is thy punishment?' He replied, 'That which I have determined for myself. Every day my ashes are collected and I am judged; then I am burnt and the ashes scattered over seven seas.'

"He called up Balaam by necromancy. He said to him, 'Who is honored in this world?' He replied, 'Israel.' 'What about joining them?' He replied (Deut. xxiii. 6), 'Thou shalt not seek their peace or their prosperity all thy days.' He said to him, 'What is the punishment of this man?' He replied, 'By boiling pollution.'

"He called up Jesus by necromancy. He said to him, 'Who is honored in this world?' He replied, 'Israel.' 'What about joining them?' He replied, 'Seek their good, seek not their harm. Every one who injures them, (it is) as if he injured the apple of his eye.' He said, 'What is the punishment of this man?' He replied, 'By boiling filth.' For a teacher has said, 'Every one who mocks at the words of the wise is punished by boiling filth.' Come and see the difference between the sinners of Israel and the heathen prophets!'"

The object of the gruesome story contained in this passage is to show the fate of the three chief enemies of Israel, i. e., Titus, Balaam and Jesus. And although Jesus is made to regard the Jews as the chosen race, the specially beloved, the apple of Yahveh's eye, yet his punishment seems to be the severest. Whatever that punishment was we know not. At any rate it expresses a hatred towards the most hated of all hated men.

The information which we derive from the Talmudic notices of Jesus is very little if any at all. They add nothing new to the authentic history of Jesus, as contained in

the Gospels. In general, though not in detail, they serve to confirm the Christian tradition, by giving independent, and indeed hostile evidence that Jesus of Nazareth really existed, a fact which has by some been called in question. But if, beyond this, the Talmudic Jesus-tradition has no value for the history of Christianity, it shows the attitude of Judaism as represented by its leaders, towards Jesus. He is the deceiver, the sorcerer, the apostate, the "Sinner of Israel"; his birth Jewish contempt blackened into a disgrace, and his death is dismissed as the mere execution of a pernicious criminal. And thus it is to this day. To understand Jesus and his religion Judaism must divest itself of Rabbinism. Not the Talmud, but the New Testament is the real source for the history of Jesus.

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